



How Much Does A Dog Cost?

The Cost Of Owning A Dog



In Australia

The Average Yearly Price Breakdown

So, you want to own a dog? That's great! Join the millions of Australians that are proud dog owners in this fair land. Before you go to your local adoption shelter or breeder, it's worth figuring out the **exact cost** of owning a dog in Australia.

Because owning a dog is like raising a child. There are a ton of expenses to consider to make sure your dog has the happiest, healthiest life possible.

◦ How Much Does a Dog Cost Per Year?

I am not one to keep vital information from you so here is a summary of the average cost of a dog. If you think something is more expensive or cheaper than you first thought, read on through the rest of the article. We'll then dive deep into each category to expand on the nuances of each expense.



- The following values were gathered from **RSPCA** Australia and a mix of personal experiences.

The RSPCA estimates that a dog will cost around \$910 per year on top of initial costs.

Whereas a report by Animal Medicines in 2013 estimated that yearly dog ownership costs \$1627. As you can see, the true cost is quite difficult to calculate but here are some averages for your consideration:

1. Bedding - \$100-\$200
2. Council registration fees - vary from state to state. Generally, \$20-200 depending on whether your dog is de-sexed or not.
3. Collars, leashes and harnesses - \$40-100 every two to five years
4. De-sexing costs - \$200-500 depending on age, size and gender
5. Flea and worming treatments and prevention - \$120 per year
6. Food - \$800 per year depending on the quantity and quality
7. Grooming - depends on how often you groom and whether it is done professionally. \$70-90 per month for professional grooming.
8. Microchipping - \$60-100
9. Name tags - \$5-25
10. Pet insurance - \$20-60
11. Puppy vaccinations - \$150-250
12. Puppy training - \$100+ per private session
13. Toys and treats - \$50+
14. Annual vaccinations - \$100+



15. Veterinary check-ups - \$50-100+ per year

The Cost of Buying or Adopting a Dog

- **Adopting a dog**

Let's start at the beginning. As it happens, there is rarely such thing as a free dog. Unless they have been given to you by a neighbour or elderly loved one, adopting a dog will still cost you money.

Adopting a dog from the RSPCA costs around \$500 for puppies under 6 months. The fees are slightly less for adult dogs and elderly dogs. This is to incentivize you to adopt an older dog and give them a forever home.

Adoption fees are not for nothing. If you're adopting from a reputable shelter, they will likely go towards microchipping, vaccinations, initial veterinary checks, flea treatment, worming treatment and documentation. Sometimes it also includes de-sexing surgery, but it depends on the shelter. Large adoption chains like the RSPCA have more resources to offer services like this.

That said, don't discount local dog shelters. Adoption fees will be lower at local independent shelters. Having a smaller number of adoptees also means that you get a lot of one-to-one attention as you try to find the furry friend for you.

- **Buying a dog**

Onto buying. Buying a dog can vary widely depending on who you are buying from. Factors such as age, pedigree, breed and even gender can factor into the cost of a puppy. Purebreds are always more expensive.

A purebred French Bulldog puppy could cost you up to \$3000 in Australia today, as they are considered "designer breeds".



◦ Initial Costs of Owning a New Dog

Like with all major purchases, the first year is always the most expensive. You have all of the “onboarding costs” so to speak.

A vital part of owning a dog in Australia microchipping and registration. You legally must register and microchip your dog with the local council. There is a registration fee to add them to the council pet register. Additionally, you have the microchip dog cost itself. It shouldn't cost you more than \$100 to microchip your dog.

Dog de-sexing costs are only a factor in the beginning. The price will vary depending on how old your dog is and their sex. Spaying is generally more expensive than neutering. You spay female dogs and neuter male dogs. After that, you have the first items of comfort for your pup to consider. This means food, bedding, collars, name tags, leashes, treats, toys, crates, carriers, bowls etc. So many things to think about!

This is what makes the first year the most damning financially. All of these items are bought brand new. Some things will last you a long time and therefore you won't have many repeat purchases in future. Alternatively, food, treats and veterinary expenses are things you should consistently factor into your budget.

◦ Dog Food Costs

Food is the largest cost you'll have as a dog owner. Luckily, it's a relatively consistent one. Unless your dog develops an allergy later in life, your dog food cost will remain relatively consistent over the years.

There are dog food brands at all ends of the spectrum. Super high-end, luxury, grain-free, high-protein content food. Then you have the budget food brands that tend to have more preservatives and additives. I am not one to judge what is affordable for you to feed your dog long term. If I can offer any guidance here, it would be these two golden rules of choosing a dog food brand:

1. Purchase the highest quality dog food you can afford

Instead of overextending yourself to a luxury brand that is unsustainable for you, do the best with what you have.



2. Be wary of ingredients of cheap dog food

If you are on a budget, you do need to watch out for certain nasty chemicals that can be lurking in dog food. Sulphite preservatives have made headlines in Australia because of how dangerous they can be to dogs. Australia's pet food industry is less regulated than the US and EU. Therefore, low cost dog food can be accredited for consumption with these dangerous chemicals present.

“A longstanding pet food/pet meat safety issue in Australia relates to the use of sulphur dioxide and sodium and potassium sulfate preservatives. These can cause thiamine (Vitamin B1) deficiency, which can be fatal.” - RSPCA Australia

- Watch out for these ingredients in cheaper foods.

Special food diets like raw food diets and grain-free can be more expensive. It's worth shopping around for the best options within your budget range.

Similarly, dog treats come at all budget ranges. You can create your own at home. You can also buy luxury treats at the top end of the scale. As with regular dog food, adjust as necessary.

◦ Typical Vet Costs Australia

Veterinary costs are the second-largest ongoing expense you'll have as a dog owner. Second only to food. But at least with food, you have a relatively good idea of how much it will cost per month. You'll learn your dog's consumption when they get to adulthood and therefore can budget appropriately.

Vet costs are not as reliable. Anything can happen to your dog, unfortunately.

Emergencies come at the most unfortunate, inopportune moments of financial strain. You'll put a down payment on a house. Then your phone screen will crack. Then your dog will swallow a paperclip and need emergency surgery. All at once - that's the way of the universe.

It's really difficult to say when vet costs might be because it depends on:



- Where you live in Australia
- What procedures your dog needs
- Whether you have pet insurance

In that vein, you can only really control two things:

1. Create a dog emergency fund

It's worth setting aside a certain amount per year or month for potential veterinary emergencies. If something dire happens to your dog, you don't want to be caught short. Expect to spend roughly \$450 per year on routine veterinary costs. That could include check-ups and dogs vaccinations costs. Emergencies could be thousands. This leads me to my next tip:

2. Get Pet Insurance

Pet Insurance is an extra expense but so worth it. Depending on your dog's age, breed and prior health conditions, you can expect to pay \$20-60 per year for insurance. Your policy could potentially save you thousands in vet fees, or at least assist you in paying for it.

Beyond veterinary costs, you also have routine medicines to consider. Think flea and tick treatments, worming tablets etc. You can expect to spend around \$30-40 a year on these.

o The Cost of Dog Equipment

By dog equipment, I mean all the things you need to support a happy healthy pup. You've already factored in beds, leashes, collars etc. into the initial costs.

But all things break down over time. Collars need replacing. Dog tags get lost. Beds get bent out of shape. Toys get smelly and old.



That's not to say that all of these things are replaceable every year. Collars can last a very very long time. As do leashes. You can expect to spend between \$20-50 on every 2-5 years.

You'll find yourself racking up expenses most when it comes to toys. This is because dogs are like children. They get infatuated by certain toys and then **get** bored. Toys are lost and forgotten often. They get extremely dirty or broken beyond repair.

Luckily, toys are available at all price points. You can spend between \$20 and \$100 per year on toys depending on what you buy.

Poop bags, another essential, can cost between \$3-10 for a pack.

◦ Dog Grooming, Training, Walking and Boarding

The Optionals

Finally, let's talk about the optional costs. The things you don't have to pay for but you can if you want to.

You can absolutely groom, train, walk and board your dog for free. You'll have some initial costs for grooming combs and dog shampoo. You may want to purchase some dog training books or online courses. Walking is largely free once you have a collar and a leash. A kind neighbour or family member can look after your dog while you are away.

Money saved all around. But sometimes these options aren't available to you.

Dog Training Costs

You might have adopted a dog that is more complex to train. Therefore, you'll want to hire a professional dog trainer to help you. Group dog training sessions can cost around \$50 in Australia, depending on the region. Private lessons can cost upwards of \$150 per session.



Dog Grooming Costs

As for grooming, some dogs benefit from a professional groom from time to time. Or perhaps you just want to pamper your pooch! Grooming costs depend on the services you request and the size and weight of your dog. For example, it can cost just \$10 to get your dog's nails clipped if they are unruly. A short coat small dog may cost \$40 to groom. Whereas a long-haired large dog can cost up to \$200 to groom. It's a sliding scale.

Dog Boarding and Dog Sitting Costs

Boarding is almost always quite a large expense. You want your dog to be in the best possible care, with kind carers and plenty of space to roam. There are different levels of boarding to consider. You have kennel accommodation which is likely the cheapest. You can expect to spend between \$30-70 per day. Free-range accommodation is pricier. You can expect to spend \$50-100 per day. Like grooming, this would be a sliding scale depending on your dog's size.

Alternatively, you may want to hire a dog sitter to care for your dog in your own home while you are away. Prices vary widely depending on if the person is house-sitting for you too. However, it does tend to be cheaper than dog boarding. Day dog sitters can cost around \$20-40 per day. Overnight sitters can cost \$40-60 per night.

Dog Walking Costs

Your need for a regular dog walker completely depends on your lifestyle. I don't recommend adopting or buying a dog if you never have the time to walk them yourself. Simply because dog walking is a key part of a dog's socialisation and training. It's a bonding experience between owner and pup. It's difficult to replicate that in other areas of your daily lives together.

Moreover, if you never walk your dog yourself, you won't learn their unique quirks, fears and distractions in the outside world. When you do walk them yourself for some reason or another, you might not be prepared for how your dog behaves with other dogs, humans or objects. This is all key to raising a kind and considerate pup.



That said, it's natural that sometimes you are unable to walk your dogs yourself. It could be a couple of times a week or just once every few months that you're caught short for time.

A dog walker will cost you anywhere from \$15-40 per hour. If you are a regular customer of theirs, you might be able to negotiate a package deal per week.

Final Thoughts

There are so many things to think about when adopting or buying a dog. They are no small investment. Remember that outside of these averages, life does happen. Unexpected veterinary bills arise. You may buy toys and treats on impulse. You may just be the type of person to spend more on your pets than others. There is evidence to suggest that millennials as a generation spend more on their pets than Baby Boomers and Gen X. It's difficult to quantify and plan for all of life's eventualities with your dog or, indeed, the type of owner you'll be.

That said, I hope this article was helpful in understanding the cost of owning a dog in Australia. Plan ahead and keep a vet savings fund for emergencies to be as prepared as possible for any financial surprises.

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